

PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

RECREATION ACTIVITIES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Cross-country Skiing and Snowshoeing

Desired Experiences and Site Selection Considerations

Cross-country skiers propel themselves across snow-covered terrain by either striding forward (classic style) or side-to-side in a skating motion (skate skiing). Skiers are generally treated as pedestrians, meaning they are allowed to traverse anywhere on department lands not posted closed to the public. Other trail uses are not typically allowed on trails designated as and groomed for cross-country skiing. Skiers' experiences are enhanced when trails are located on a mix of hilly and flat topography and debris from surrounding vegetation, rocks, and roots is kept to a minimum. Groomed trails enhance the experience but are not necessary for the activity. Cross-country skiing can be a highly aerobic activity and exhaust from nearby combustion engines can cause conflicts with some skiers.

The types of cross-country skiing that will be accommodated help determine trail width; skate skiing requires a wider trail corridor. Generally, trails should be constructed a minimum of 4' wide with an additional 2' shoulders on either side. Although groomed trails are not required for every type of cross-country skiing, grooming is often the expected experience when it is noted that a property provides cross-country ski trails. Grooming equipment width, height, turning radius, and weight should all be used to determine trail width, layout and bridge design. Grooming and track setting for classic style requires specialized equipment and techniques. Trail preparation employs snow machines that tow snow compaction, texturing and track-setting devices. Groomers must adapt such equipment to the condition of the snow—crystal structure, temperature, degree of compaction, moisture content. Skilled grooming is a key to providing quality cross-country ski trails. Grooming costs should be considered in determining the amount and nature of cross-country trails at properties.

Snowshoers use oval or racket-shaped frames with a network of straps stretched across and attached to a boot. Snowshoeing is most popular in conditions of deep snow that enable participants to walk on top of the snow without breaking through or sinking in. Although some snow shoeing occurs on designated and signed trails, many participants seek experiences off-trail. Opportunities in forests that hold deeper snow for longer periods are desired.

Cross-country ski and snowshoe trails may be used during non-snow cover conditions for other uses. Larger networks of cross-country ski trails often have shelters or warming huts at trailheads. Lighted trails are growing in popularity in some areas, as are candlelight ski events.

Notable Differences in Participation or Opportunities Across the State

Participation in both activities is weather-dependent and participants often travel to better snow conditions and more extensive trail systems. In particular, participants travel from southern to northern Wisconsin to take advantage of the deeper and more dependable snow cover. Some participants enter races such as the American Birkebeiner, which necessitate regular training close to home for entrants. Wisconsin has more than 700 groomed



cross-country ski trails. There are a few locations in the state where snowmaking equipment is used to enhance or create suitable conditions for groomed cross-country ski trails.

Snowshoe participation occurs across the state in the winter.

Notable Times of the Year of High or Low Participation

Winter is typically the only time of year for this use, which is entirely dependent on weather and snowfall.

Participation

Participation Rate and Frequency

Based on a 2016 survey of Wisconsin residents conducted for the development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), it is estimated that 13% of adult Wisconsin residents participate in cross-country skiing and 13% participate in snowshoeing, which ranked #44 and #46, respectively, out of 64 activities evaluated.

Days/year	% of Cross-country Skiers	% of Snowshoers
1 to 2	55	48
3 to 9	22	36
10 to 29	13	13
30 or more	11	6
Total	100%	100%

In terms of frequency, participants that engaged in cross-country skiing and snowshoeing did so less often than participants in other activities (they ranked #55 and #56, respectively, in frequency out of 64 activities evaluated).

Estimated Trends

Future participation rates for cross-country skiing are predicted to remain static. However, participation in cross-country skiing requires natural snow; if climate change is factored into future trends there could be a decrease in participation, nationally, of 36% by 2030 (White et al. 2016).

Demographics

As can be seen from the SCORP survey results in the tables below, participants in cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in Wisconsin tend to be represented quite evenly across the three categories assessed (age, gender, and residence).

Cross-country Skiing

Demographic Category	Demographic Group	% Participation Rate Within Demographic Category	% Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%)
Age	18-29	17	28
	30-39	12	17
	40-49	13	15
	50-59	12	18
	60-69	13	17



Demographic Category	Demographic Group	% Participation Rate Within Demographic Category	% Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%)
	70 and older	7	6
	Total	--	100
Gender	Female	13	50
	Male	13	50
	Total	--	100
Residence	Rural	14	53
	Urban	11	47
	Total	--	100

Snowshoeing

Demographic Category	Demographic Group	% Participation Rate Within Demographic Category	% Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%)
Age	18-29	16	26
	30-39	17	23
	40-49	14	15
	50-59	14	19
	60-69	11	14
	70 and older	4	3
	Total	--	100
Gender	Female	13	48
	Male	14	52
	Total	--	100
Residence	Rural	16	56
	Urban	11	44
	Total	--	100

References

White, E.M., J.M. Bowker, A.E. Askew, L.L. Langner, J.R. Arnold, and D.B.K. English. 2016. *Federal Outdoor Recreation Trends: Effects on Economic Opportunities*. United States Department of Agriculture.

